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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CAMPAIGN TO OUST PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to give significant coverage September 12 to former DPP Chairman Shih Ming-teh's sit-in rally to oust President Chen Shui-bian, and to a possible general strike to try to force Chen to step down. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a front-page banner headline that said "Strike to Undermine Taiwan? Daily Output Will Suffer Loss of NT\$30 Billion." The newspaper also devoted its entire page three to criticizing the idea of a nationwide strike to bring Chen down. In addition, the paper carried a banner headline on page two that read "United States Opposes Ousting Bian by Unconstitutional Means."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial criticized the idea of a general strike, saying it is merely aimed at undermining the results of democratic elections via a mass movement. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also criticized moves to oust President Chen as "a ridiculous attempt to subvert Taiwan's democracy." An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" urged Washington to continue to maintain "an unbiased stance toward the complicated picture of Taiwan's politics." An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News," on the other hand, urged the DPP to quickly draw a line between itself and President Chen. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said Shih's campaign is a good lesson for Taiwan's democracy. End summary.

A) "Please, What Taiwan Needs Is Jobs, Not a Strike"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (9/12):

"... As for launching a recall and a strike, the former will create political upheavals and deactivate democratic operations, while the latter will create social and economic disturbances, forcing more disappointed investors to leave Taiwan. Should this be the case, the objective to exert pressure on the government may be attained, but who will benefit from such an action? The answer is definitely those careerists who attempt to usurp power, not the general public and workers who will suffer severe disasters; the answer is definitely China, not Taiwan. ...

"While using a strike as a means to oust Bian may be given the dignified name of a demonstration of people power, it is actually a mass movement to subvert the results of democratic elections. ... President Chen's performance in reform may not be very satisfactory, but mobilizing the people to oust him can neither help speed up the pace of reform nor win the support of the majority of the people. ..."

B) "Sit-in Gets the Big Thumbs down"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] wrote in an editorial (9/12):

"... Many analysts believe the campaign will fizzle out and fail to achieve its ultimate aim of Chen being forced to step down. And if events so far are anything to go by then they appear to be right. The president and the DPP have already received the message loud and clear that the people will no longer tolerate corruption, and all the cases of alleged impropriety that have been uncovered are being dealt with by the authorities. Shih and the organizers should also heed the message that the weekend's events have conveyed to them and end this ridiculous attempt to subvert Taiwan's democracy."

C) "Taiwan's Autonomy Cannot be 'Deposed'"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/12):

"... For international observers, the most intriguing aspect of Taiwan's recent political upheavals is the extent to which the judicial system can act as an arbiter to find the truth of the allegations of scandal surrounding President Chen and pave the way for constitutional methods to handle this difficult crisis. Nevertheless, claims by some pro-KMT pundits that the U.S. can or should persuade or push Chen out of office has riveted renewed attention on the role of the U.S. in Taiwan's domestic politics. For example, some local pro-KMT media have mistakenly quoted parts of statements by U.S. officials and 'spun' such excerpts into claims that Washington does 'not support' the Chen administration or even that the U.S. would favor Chen's resignation. To the contrary, the U.S. administration under Republican President George W. Bush has consistently stuck to the position that it respects the capability of Taiwan's judicial system to investigate the allegations and has confidence in the wisdom of Taiwan's people to bridge domestic divisions.

"We urge Washington to continue to maintain an unbiased stance toward the complicated picture of Taiwan politics because any miscalculated reaction or policy shift toward President Chen at the present time will surely be twisted and utilized by pan-KMT opposition or even the DPP administration, regardless of Washington's intent. ... Washington's prime concern lies not only in a peaceful, constitutional and democratic resolution to Taiwan's political difficulties, but also in preventing the authoritarian People's Republic of China from interfering in Taiwan politics through military or other means. ... Based on past experience, what the U.S. fears most in cross-strait relations are 'surprises' in rhetoric from Taiwan and miscalculations by Beijing. What Washington wants are consistent, predictable and peaceful policies to be maintained by both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

"The long-delayed passage of three major defensive weapons procurements due to two years of unrelenting boycotts by the KMT and its allied People First Party has already cast a dark shadow on U.S.-Taiwan relations. Washington's perception now is if Taiwan cannot display concrete steps to defend itself by curbing the impact of partisan disputes on national security and defense, then the island country will run the risk of losing U.S. support. In light of Washington's efforts to convince the PRC to act as a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international community, Taiwan should take the initiative to play a positive role by showing greater resolution to upgrade its own defensive capability, implement domestic reforms, promote normalization of cross-strait relations and encourage 'democratic openings' in the PRC itself. ..."

D) "DPP Should Quickly Draw a Line between Itself and the 'Chen Family Regime'!"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (9/12):

"... The DPP does not exist simply to defend the corrupt Chen, regardless of its honor; the DPP government certainly does not exist just to defend Chen, the national criminal, at any cost. The DPP must come to its senses and realize that the current political situation has deteriorated to the 'one hundred percent Chen family regime,' which is definitely not the DPP's ideal 'DPP regime,' or a

'nativist regime' that the DPP once wished for! ..."

E) "Shih's Battle a Good Lesson"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post"
[circulation: 30,000] editorialized (9/12):

"Shih Ming-teh's 'sunset battle' enters its fourth day today with sustained momentum. Win or lose, he has taught Taiwan a lesson: With the right leadership, reconciliation of all kinds is possible. ... More importantly, the movement has drawn support from Taiwan's rival political camps, the pan-green camp for Taiwan independence and the pan-blue camp for the status quo. The green group estimates 30 percent of the depose-Chen rally are his former supporters. ... At 65, Shih may not have another battle to fight, but his 'sunset battle' may prove to be the dawn of maturity for Taiwan's democracy."

YOUNG